

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SOPN, KS, US
SUBJ: KOREAN PRESS ON PRESIDENT CARTER'S JANUARY 13 INTERVIEW

REF: SEOUL 363 (DTG 160907Z JAN 78)

SUMMARY: BOTH ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPERS AND ONE VERNACULAR EDITION OF JANUARY 17 CARRIED FULL-LENGTH EDITORIALS PRAISING PRESIDENT INDIVIDUALLY AS WELL AS HIS POLICY STATEMENTS OF JAN 13. SEOUL SHINMUN, HOWEVER, EDITORIALIZED THAT IT IS STILL UNABLE TO BELIEVE ADMINISTRATION IS NOT RELEGATING ASIA TO A POSITION OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE IN COMPARISON TO EUROPE. END SUMMARY.

1. KOREA TIMES AND (SISTER PAPER) HANGUK ILBO EDITORIALS MENTION BRIEFLY (BUT POSITIVELY) PRESIDENT'S RE-AFFIRMATION OF DEFENSE COMMITMENT, WHILE ADVOCATING AT LENGTH FOR KOREANS TO RE-EVALUATE THEIR POOR REGARD FOR CARTER, E.G. "JIMMY CARTER HAS BEEN TREATED BY THE KOREAN PEOPLE SOMEWHAT UNREASONABLY FROM THE BEGINNING OF HIS PRESIDENCY". EDITORIALS NOTE "US PRESIDENT IS GETTING MORE MATURE, BEING MORE CONFIDENT OF HIS FUTURE WORK" AND "WE CAN
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ANTICIPATE STRIKING ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE SECOND AND THIRD YEARS OF HIS PRESIDENCY". DESCRIBING CARTER AS "HONEST" ALTHOUGH "TRICKY" (SIC), EDITORIALS REGARD HIM AS "A RARE, OUTSTANDING US PRESIDENT OF HIGH INTELLIGENCE", WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING TROOP WITHDRAWAL POLICY IS STILL IN EFFECT, EDITORIALS WISHFULLY CONCLUDE CARTER KNOWS HOW TO REVISE HIS IDEAS WHEN FACED WITH REALITY.

2. KOREA HERALD EDITORIAL LAUDS PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO RE-AFFIRM DEFENSE COMMITMENT PARTICULARLY AT THIS TIME WHEN PTS CASE HAS POSSIBILITY OF OVERSHADOWING BROADER IMPORTANCE OF GOOD US-ROK RELATIONS. PRAISES PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT AS COUNTERING CONGRESSIONAL THREAT TO LINK COMPENSATORY MEASURES TO PTS SCANDAL. PRESIDENT'S ENCOURAGEMENT OF SOUTH/NORTH KOREA DIRECT TALKS IS "PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT". EDITORIAL SOLIDLY SUPPORTS DIRECT APPROACH, RELEGATING 4-POWER CONFERENCE IDEA (INCLUDING US/PRC) TO POSITION OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE.

3. OFFICIAL SEOUL SHINMUN EDITORIAL "ASIAN POLICY OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION" STATES US ADMINISTRATION GIVES FIRST PRIORITY TO EUROPE, BOTH POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY WITH COMPARATIVE DISREGARD TO ASIA. SPECIFICALLY CITES AS EVIDENCE US TROOPS TO BE WITHDRAWN FROM KOREA WILL BE ADDED TO NATO DEFENSE (SEE CLARIFYING WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT OF JAN 16, STATE 011201 - DTG 161826Z JAN 78). ON FUTURE VICE PRESIDENTIAL TRIP TO ASIA, EXPRESSES HOPE THAT MONDALE WILL TALK WITH LEADERS OF EAST ASIAN NATIONS ABOUT KOREAN PENINSULA AND GENERAL EAST ASIAN PROBLEMS. IMPLIES ROK PRESIDENT MIGHT BE AMONG THOSE LEADERS WITH WHOM VICE PRESIDENT SHOULD MEET.
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